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ABSTRACT

This collection provides summaries of documents on which the policies of the Oklahoma County Libraries System are based, the "Statement of Purpose and Goals," and "Policy for Selection of Materials," as well as brief descriptions of procedures for materials selection and handling complaints or suggestions from patrons. Documents include: (1) the Metropolitan Library Act of 1965, which establishes the legal basis for the systems; (2) library funding under a special tax levy provided for by a 1960 constitutional amendment; (3) the Freedom to Read Statement of the American Library Association and Association of American Publishers, which was adopted by the Metropolitan Library Commission in 1973; and (4) the Library Bill of Rights, which was adopted by the American Library Association in 1948 and in 1969 by the Metropolitan Library Commission. (AP)

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OKLAHOMA COUNTY LIBRARIES SYSTEM

POLICIES GUIDING LIBRARY SERVICE AND SELECTION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

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"Today our society is confronted not only with many new and serious problems, but with great unrest. To fulfill the needs of a rapidly changing world requires the creative use of all of our resources — especially our human and educational resources. Unprecedented opportunities for librarians and trustees are at hand. There are opportunities to see that the library assumes a leadership role in terms of its rich resources for the decision makers of our country. There are opportunities to enlarge the library's educational role for all people, and to expand its services to help the disadvantaged secure the information and knowledge that will enable them to enter the mainstream of American life. Only by fulfilling these opportunities today will the library take its rightful place in the world of tomorrow."

–The Library Trustee

LEGAL BASIS

Metropolitan Library Act

The Metropolitan Library Act is the state law which provides for establishing city-county library systems "to give all the citizens of the counties affected hereby equal access to comprehensive library collections."

The Act was passed by the Oklahoma Legislature in 1965 (Title 65, Article 10, Chapter 9).

It states that the governing body for the library system is the Metropolitan Library Commission.

This Commission is "empowered to purchase or own library buildings and furnishings, to administer the expenditure of library funds, to operate and maintain a city-county library system and to adopt such rules and regulations for the operation thereof as may be deemed necessary or expedient."

The Act states the "commission shall appoint a librarian of the metropolitan library system on the basis of merit and experience. Such librarian shall be a graduate of a library school accredited by the American Library Association. The librarian shall serve at the discretion of the commission. The librarian may appoint and remove staff members and other employees, subject to the approval of the commission."

Library Funding

City-county and multi-county library systems in Oklahoma are funded by a special library tax levy provided for by a 1960 constitutional amendment (Article X, Section 10A).

The amendment allows county voters to approve a "special annual recurring tax levy of not less than one mill nor more than two mills on the dollar of the assessed valuation of all taxable property in the county . . ."

The levy is to "provide funds for the purpose of establishing and maintaining or aiding in establishing and maintaining public libraries and library services."

A library mill levy election is called by the Board of County Commissioners upon its own initiative or upon petition of county voters.

Oklahoma County voters approved a 1.9 mill levy for libraries in 1964.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND GOALS

A public library must have definite goals and purposes.

In 1972 the Metropolitan Library Commission adopted a "Statement of Purpose and Long-Range Goals" for the Oklahoma County Libraries System.

It serves as the guide for the services this library system is delivering and pursuing.

The policy states, "The purpose of the Oklahoma County Libraries System as an educational institution is to provide and convey informational, educational, cultural and recreational library services to groups and individuals of all ages in Oklahoma County. This purpose will be fulfilled by the Executive Director and the Staff of the Oklahoma County Libraries System, under the authority of the Metropolitan Library Commission of Oklahoma County."

It includes the following Long-Range Goals:

* Select, organize and provide access to available resources from the sum of recorded fact, opinion and creative effort, in whatever form is most appropriate to meet the individual or group needs.
* Expand continuing education opportunities for children, young people and adults through the provision of materials, programs, services and support, with and through other agencies.
* Provide an objective source of knowledge broad in content — for an alert, informed electorate — to which the citizen may turn to become more politically and socially aware.
* Enter into and support the civic, cultural and leisure time activities of groups and organizations designed to improve the quality of life in the community.
* Serve the community as a center for information — representing innovative opportunities for development as well as traditional ones — in the specialized areas of government operations, business, industry, education, the arts, the sciences and the humanities.
* Preserve and defend the heritage of freedom of expression and freedom from invasion of privacy by assuring that library users will be able to choose any subject and to borrow any materials without receiving inquiries about their motives.

- Afford service to citizens based on their individual needs, regardless of where they live, their economic condition or educational background.
- Help individuals adapt to change, to know more about themselves, their environment, to understand other people and other life styles, to know more about their nation and other nations and the world, to satisfy their intellectual curiosity, to experience the joy and stimulation of reading, to have the widest possible range of information enabling them to function more effectively in the contemporary world.
- Participate in present and emerging networks of state, regional and national libraries and other information centers designed to share library resources and information cooperatively.
- Employ modern technology and informational media to serve the library user — media such as television, radio, microwave, data banks and related communications systems.
- Remain alert to changing trends and revise patterns of library service to meet the needs created by such trends.
- Provide the necessary staff and develop its capabilities to offer modern library service through staff participation in continuing education programs, in-service training and professional library and related associations.
- Maintain communication with the Metropolitan Library Commission of Oklahoma County and related governmental bodies for support and guidance.

FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT

This statement, initially made jointly by the American Library Association and the Association of American Publishers, was adopted by the Metropolitan Library Commission in 1973.

The policy is concerned with the freedom to read as guaranteed by the Constitution and states that the library will resist the efforts of private groups and public authorities to remove or censor books, to label "controversial" books, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries.

"These (censorship) actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that

censorship and suppression are needed to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals . . . The censors, public and private, assume that they should determine what is good and what is bad for their fellow-citizens."

The policy states that, "Those with faith in free men will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights." It affirms these propositions:

1. Librarians should "make available the widest diversity of views and expression, including those which are unorthodox or unpopular with the majority."

2. Librarians "do not need to endorse every idea or presentation contained in the books they make available."

3. Librarians should not "determine the acceptability of a book on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author."

4. "There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others."

5. Readers should not be forced to "accept with any book the prejudgment of a label characterizing the book or author as subversive or dangerous."

6. Librarians are "guardians of the people's freedom to read." They should "contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large."

7. Librarians should provide "books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression."

The statement concludes:

"We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of books. We do so because we believe that they are good, possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours."

LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

The Library Bill of Rights is the library profession's interpretation of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

It was adopted in 1948 by the American Library Association and in 1969 by the Metropolitan Library Commission.

The Library Bill of Rights states:

1. Library materials should be chosen for their "interest, information and enlightenment of all people of the community. In no case should library materials be excluded because of the race or nationality or the social, political or religious views of the authors."

2. Libraries should provide materials presenting "all points of view." Library materials should not be "proscribed or removed from libraries because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval."

3. "Censorship should be challenged by libraries."

4. "Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas."

5. "The rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his age, race, religion, national origins or social or political views."

6. Meeting rooms "should be available on equal terms" to all community groups, provided that the meetings are open to the public.

POLICY FOR SELECTION OF MATERIALS

A "Policy for Selection of Materials" was adopted by the library system in 1966. The 17-page document provides guidelines and criteria for reviewing and selecting materials for the library collection.

Copies of the policy are available at all branches (and bookmobiles) of the library system.

The policy states, "The public library serves many and varied groups of people. It cannot, to satisfy the interests and beliefs of one group, sacrifice the interests of others."

Among the guidelines used to select library materials are: contemporary significance or permanent value, accuracy, popular demand, authority of the author, reviews by the media, relation of work to the collection, price, format and scarcity of information in the subject area.

The policy outlines the responsibility for selection and states,

"Ultimate responsibility for book selection, as for all library activities, rests with the Director, who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Library Commission."

HOW MATERIALS ARE SELECTED

The library system faces a monumental selection task when buying library books and other materials. More than 40,000 book titles are published each year, but the library budget allows buying only 8,000-10,000 titles annually.

Professional library staff in each library agency participate in this process.

Heading the selection process are two full-time Materials Coordinators. They are assisted by a Selection Team composed of staff members from several libraries who serve on a rotating basis. The Selection Team meets weekly with the Materials Coordinators to review and consider for purchase new books and other materials.

The Materials Selection Office, with computer assistance from the Data Processing Department, compiles recommended Selection Lists (computer print-outs) about three times a month.

Head librarians at the system libraries, department heads at the Main Library and other staff review these lists and make selections for their respective libraries. They are not limited to these lists and may make other materials selections. Monthly Replacement Lists are also compiled and handled in this manner.

The majority of the books are selected on the basis of reviews published in professional journals and reviewing services. In the event of a questionable review or a problematical book, a copy is requested for review.

Most children's books are selected on the basis of review copies read by the staff as well as professional reviews in library literature.

While books represent the major portion of the library collection, similar selection processes are used for 16mm and 8mm films, recordings, framed art prints, magazines, serial publications, newspapers, etc.

Just as selecting new library materials is a continuous activity, so is updating and improving collections. This is done by removing outdated and worn out materials, rebinding certain books and ordering new copies of others. Each library has most of its collection reevaluated annually.

CITIZEN SUGGESTIONS

The library system realizes that its books and other materials may not please every member of the community. To handle complaints about library materials, a Request for Reconsideration form is available at all libraries.

When a citizen complains about a certain book, he or she is asked to fill out the reconsideration form. The form asks for specific objections to the book, whether the citizen has read the book, whether he is aware of reviews of the work, what he believes to be the theme of the work and so on.

When the form is returned to the library, the two Materials Coordinators and the Executive Director begin a thorough reevaluation of the criticized material. The original reasons and criteria for selection of the material are reviewed in light of the Materials Selection Policy and other library policy statements such as the Library Bill of Rights and The Freedom to Read Statement.

A written response to the complaint is returned to the citizen as quickly as possible.

The library system also considers written suggestions from patrons to purchase library materials.

Suggested materials must fit within the guidelines of the Materials Selection Policy, which stresses purchasing informational and educational materials of lasting value.

10

"We Americans know that if freedom means anything, it means the right to think. And the right to think means the right to read — anything, written anywhere, by any man, at any time."

–President Harry S. Truman and President Herbert Hoover

"The American Library Association holds that it is the parent — and only the parent — who may restrict his children — and only *his* children — in reading matter. The parent who would rather his child did not read certain kinds of materials should so advise the child."

–ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee

"You can only protect your liberties in this world by protecting the other man's freedom. You can only be free if I am free."

–Attorney Clarence Darrow

Your Oklahoma County Libraries System

Main Library — 131 NW 3 (corner of NW 3 and Robinson) — 235-0571

Belle Isle Branch — 5501 N. Villa (corner of Villa and the Northwest Expressway) — 843-9601

Bethany Branch — 3510 N. Mueller — 789-8363

Capitol Hill Branch — 334 SW 26 (corner of SW 26 and Hudson) — 634-6308

Del City Branch — 4509 SE 15 (in the Huey Long Community Center) — 672-1377

Edmond Branch — 10 S. Boulevard — 341-9282

Midwest City Branch — 3210 Belaire (just west of Midwest Blvd., about half-way between Reno and NE 10) — 732-4828

Ralph Ellison Branch — 2000 NE 23 (corner of NE 23 and Eastern) — 424-1437

Southern Oaks Branch — 6900 S. Walker — 631-4468

Village Branch — 9304 Penn Place (southeast corner of the Casady Square Shopping Center at Pennsylvania and Britton Rd.) — 848-3539

Warr Acres Branch — 5901 NW 63 (just west of MacArthur) — 721-2616

Wright Branch — 2101 Exchange — 235-5035

PLUS

Windsor Hills Bookmobile — NW 23 and Meridian (Windsor Hills Shopping Center) — 943-8211

Four roving bookmobiles

More than 50 small book collections all over the county — in senior citizen centers, jails, outlying county communities, hospitals and community centers

For bookmobile schedule and community book site locations, call the Extension Services Office at the Main Library, 235-0571, Ext. 58.